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ABSTRACT

Advice on succeeding in college is offered for the nontraditional student: the student who returns to college at a later age. Assets that the nontraditional, returning students have include strong motivation and valuable life experiences, the ability to interact, and the ability to handle a variety of responsibilities at once. Suggestions are offered regarding the following: maximizing the college experience; using the whole campus; learning how to learn; seeking as many viewpoints as possible on all topics, but forming an individual viewpoint; monitoring one's feelings; planning to adjust one's lifestyle and managing one's time; and making use of student services. Some of the adjustments that returning students often have to make and strategies for coping with them are covered. Attention is directed to impatience, grade competition, and overconfidence or lack of confidence. Six mistaken ideas are also addressed, including the following: a college education provides all of the skills and knowledge needed for success and satisfaction on the job and a professor is an ideal work model. In addition to providing four guidelines for career planning during college, ways to avoid abruptly ending one's education after the bachelor's degree are discussed. (SW)

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HOW TO SUCCEED IN COLLEGE: A GUIDE FOR THE NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENT

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Foreword

If you have decided to browse through this booklet, you must in some way relate to the non-traditional college student. What is a "non-traditional student"? You may be one without realizing it. Broadly speaking, a non-traditional student is someone who has decided to return to college at a later age—later, that is, than 18 to 22 years old, which until recently was thought the "normal" age for a college student. Perhaps you already fit this definition. Or maybe you're just thinking about returning to school.

In any case, you have some important decisions ahead of you—and making them requires a special kind of courage. Hard work, of course, is demanded of any college student. But in some ways, the workload is even heavier for the non-traditional student. Later we'll take a closer look at some of the special problems you may encounter when pursuing a college education.

Remember, however, that you and other returning students also have a real advantage over your younger peers: You have come to realize that education is a lifelong process, not a formality that grinds to a halt at age 22. And today, perhaps more than ever, you have the opportunity to pursue a college education at any time in your life. More and more, the university (and society at large) recognizes the special needs of the non-traditional student. Educators have responded by making college a more flexible process. You can approach it at your own pace. This flexibility also extends to paying for college. A college education is an expensive proposition, of course. But, thanks to various financial aid outlets, it is becoming more accessible to would-be students of every financial (and social) status.

This booklet is designed to tell you more about what it means to be a non-traditional student. We'll discuss the advantages and disadvantages presented by your special status, and how to capitalize on them and overcome them respectively. We'll also view college education in its largest context: that is, as one crucial step in career and life planning.

The Returning Student: A Thumbnail Sketch

The rewards of a college degree are well known. Yet, for any number of reasons, many people choose not to continue their education immediately after graduating from high school. In recent years, however, there has been a change. The number of students is rising dramatically.

Statistics confirm that college no longer exists only for young adults fresh out of high school. Enrollments are up for students of all ages. U.S. Census Bureau figures show that between 1967 and 1977 there was a 27% increase in college enrollment of students 18 and 19 years old. But during the same years, enrollment of students 30 to 34 years of age

increased *179%!* That's more than six times the increase for 18- and 19-year olds. Among those older students, the number of men more than doubled (from 239,000 to 511,000) and the number of women more than quadrupled (from 117,000 to 481,000).

Older students have a variety of backgrounds and goals. Some went to work for a few years after high school and are now in their early 20s. Some have waited longer to complete their advanced education—hence the large number of non-traditional students in their early 30s. Some returning students over 35 are retirees (not necessarily by choice) from business, homemaking, government, or military service. In all age brackets, two trends prevail: Many returning students are married and/or have children, and many are women seeking to resume their formal education.

Regardless of age, sex, marital status or parenthood, all returning students must prepare to take on new challenges and change their lifestyles. Some have decided to return to an earlier abandoned occupation, or to leave one occupation for another. Some are motivated to change careers by the promise of a higher income. Some are preparing to enter the mainstream of the work world for the first time. Finally, some are returning to college with no particular goal in mind beyond bettering themselves.

Which of the above motives is closest to your own? Whatever your reasons are for resuming your formal education, they're good reasons—because they open a promising avenue for realizing your full potential.

ADVANTAGES OF RETURNING STUDENTS

As we have seen, non-traditional students are growing in number and importance. In other words, you're not alone. Furthermore, countless others like you have already completed their studies successfully and furthered their careers as they had intended. Indeed, the success rate among returning students is markedly high. One reason is that returning students—like you—possess certain assets that come only with age and experience:

1) Unlike many younger college students, you're not seeking an education because you "have to"—because your family and peers expect it. Older students tend to have stronger motivations. Your special eagerness to learn is, in itself, a valuable asset. It means you are willing to search for answers, to ask for assistance, to reach out.

2) The experiences of adult life, besides teaching you the value of an education, give you specific advantages in the classroom. Generally speaking, well-rounded individuals make the best college students. And being older, you are likely to have had more exposure to life. You have met more people and read more newspapers, magazines, letters and books than younger students. These life experiences are of immense value.

3) Older students, closer in age to their professors, tend to be less awed by them than younger students. It's important to view instructors objectively.

4) College, especially at advanced levels, involves much more than sitting in a classroom. In research and fieldwork, you'll be meeting many kinds of people. The ability of older students to interact more comfortably with others—businesspeople, for example, and office workers—is another asset.

5) The more experience one has outside the classroom, the more one is able to handle a variety of responsibilities all at once. College can be quite a juggling act for returning students, and this skill will prove handy when it becomes necessary to organize priorities, arrange study schedules, and use time efficiently.

CAPITALIZE ON YOUR ASSETS

Given this pool of potential assets, it might appear that returning students have an automatic edge on younger students. Indeed, this is often the case—but not always. As in all age groups, adults differ in talent and skill. For some who return to the classroom, the advantages of age and experience will not outweigh the drawbacks. The assets cited above are only a generalized profile

We all have different life experiences and different reactions to them. Upsetting experiences and crises can result in your having a low self-concept. Success and reward, on the other hand, can build self-confidence. In short, life experiences can exert a variety of effects on your self-concept, ranging from depression to exhilaration. So there is no guarantee that having lived longer and having done more will make you better prepared for college and a career.

Experiences are important. But more important than the experiences themselves, or your feelings about them, is how you **make use of them**—how you capitalize on your investments in living, so to speak. Here are some guidelines for making your life experiences help you when you return to college:

1) **Maximize your college experience.** College costs a lot of money; get the most out of it. Relate what you do in the classroom to the effect it will have on your career and your life. This is especially important in selecting courses. For example, suppose you plan to enter a corporate management training course upon graduation. Bear in mind that when a potential employer reviews your resume, he or she is likely to be much more impressed with an accounting course than a course in art history. This advice may sound like plain common sense. Still, it is surprising how many students plan their schedules according to whim. (If, however, you are returning to college simply to broaden your education rather than to prepare for a specific career, there's nothing wrong with a wide-reaching curriculum. Go ahead and take the art history course.)

2) **Use the whole campus.** Many students—especially of "traditional" college age—assume that an education begins and ends in the classroom. They're wrong. You'll maximize your potential at college by participating in field trips, public lectures, service committees, and conferences dealing with your area of study. Use the library whenever possible—it's a vital resource. Talk with advisors, counselors, professors, and visitors. Even informal conversations with fellow students can be valuable. Many students have landed jobs on the basis of these and other experiences

(off campus and on), even if they are not directly related to coursework. Granted, it is difficult to fit extracurricular activities into a crowded schedule—and as a returning student, you are likely to have a **very** tight agenda—but you can try.

3) **Learn how to learn.** Have you ever done a serious analysis of your work habits—either in school, in the office, or at home? Attitudes and habits can determine your success or failure in any of these settings. Take a cold, hard look at the way you work and study. Are you comfortable with the habits, patterns, and techniques you employ? Are you as productive as you could be? Asking yourself these questions will pay off at college, while you are more or less fully preoccupied with the learning process. It will also help later in your career, for, as you know, learning never really stops.

Learning how to learn also means being objective and analytical about the way classes are taught. All professors are not alike, and they certainly aren't all perfect. To whatever extent possible, find out about a course and its professor before you sign up for it. Ask other students (or the professors themselves) how the course is taught, and fill out your schedule according to the teaching styles with which you are most comfortable. For example, you may find it easier to learn in a seminar format than in a straight lecture setting. In a seminar format, where the professor leads a group discussion based on pre-class readings, there is more opportunity to ask questions (but also more of a chance to wander away from the subject of the course). If you like to learn that way, try to select as many seminar courses as possible. Some students prefer the lecture format, where the professor does most of the talking. Be careful in deciding what is best for you; you will learn more, and enjoy your classes more, as a result.

4) **On all topics, seek as many viewpoints as possible—but form your own.** Whether you prefer lectures, seminars, or other teaching formats, remember that two-way communication is essential at college. You will only get out of your education what you put into it—and that means you will have to ask questions, probe, reach out for all the information you can get. As you probe, you may discover that you don't even know the right questions to ask. But discovering how **little** you know on a given topic is the first step to learning. Probing will help you identify the right questions.

As you seek the answers, however, learn to distinguish between fact and opinion. Other people form their conclusions from their own frames of reference, which may not be consistent with yours—or with the truth. Many bright, clever individuals (and not just in college!) have limited themselves by taking shortcuts to the answers, via prejudice, ignorance, and cynicism. Consider a statement such as, "It's not what you know, it's who you know." If that were true, why would anyone bother to study? True, making contacts is a vital aspect of career planning. But regardless of "who you know," it is difficult to get a good job without good grades. You will hear many similarly cynical attitudes expressed on campus. Before you decide to agree or disagree, get all the facts.

5) **Monitor your feelings.** Every now and then, on your own or with the help of others, take a look within yourself. Ask yourself things like, "Who am I?" "What do I want out of life?" It sounds simple; it's not. Moreover, in

the rush of exams, quizzes, and research papers, it is an easy rule to forget. Remembering it, however, can save you a lot of worry. It helps you keep on track in relating your college curriculum to your career goals, and it helps you gauge the amount of time you should devote to various tasks. Suppose, for instance, that you are majoring in business administration but are taking an organic chemistry course as an elective. The person sitting next to you is a pre-med student. It's much more important for that person to get a good grade in organic chemistry than it is for you. If you get a "C" in the course, don't waste valuable time trying to raise it to a "B" or an "A"—save the effort for your economics courses.

6) **Plan to adjust your lifestyle and manage your time.** Attending college causes unavoidable changes in priorities, daily routines, and relationships. The very fact that you have decided to return to college means that you have placed a priority on getting an education. This priority will affect your other commitments and demand changes in your daily routine.

Rearranging priorities means taking a fresh look at how you use the hours you have available. College, whether part-time or full-time, fills up many hours: In addition to classroom time, consider commuting, studying, researching, and extracurricular pursuits. Those hours have to come from somewhere. Therefore you will have to budget your time more efficiently. This may mean spending less time doing things you enjoy or that are important to you. (If you have a family, the problem is worse. We'll discuss this in a moment.) No matter how you arrange your college schedule, you will run into conflicts. But effective time management will ease the situation.

Some students give little thought to time budgeting, preferring to take each hour as it comes. This is a fine attitude for vacationers—but college is no vacation. These students invariably run into scheduling conflicts, and worse, tend to forget some of the tasks associated with their coursework.

Effective time management begins with planning, organizing and scheduling—that is, planning the activities and tasks that you must fulfill, organizing them on the basis of which are the most important, and scheduling the necessary time for them. A good way to help manage your time is with a monthly or weekly planning calendar—with plenty of writing space, like the ones you see at the drugstore or in the student bookstore. For each day or week, map out all the activities and tasks that need your attention. Set aside a reasonable amount of time for each. (Also allot time for sudden interruptions, and for relaxing—college doesn't have to be a marathon race.) When you complete an assignment, cross it off and proceed to the next. In this way you can keep better track of your assignment flow, and you will not forget any of your responsibilities.

To succeed in college, of course, it is essential to budget plenty of time for out-of-class study. A good rule of thumb is two hours of study for every hour of class. That may sound like **too** much, and in fact shorter study periods are often sufficient. But this method will rescue you from the temptation of slotting study periods into "leftover" hours—and it will provide you with ample time to relax.

Another key to good time management is to schedule your most demanding tasks for the times when your mind and body are at their most alert. Leave the more routine chores for the other hours. Are you a "morning person"? If so, you may want to get up early and do your toughest homework before noon. Save the "nonthink" tasks, like grocery shopping and laundry, for afternoon or evening.

As you adjust priorities, daily routines, and the management of your time, you are in a larger sense adjusting your lifestyle. Your lifestyle includes relationships with other people—family, friends and coworkers. If you have a family to take care of, no doubt you have already given some thought to how your attending college will affect your relationship with them. The change may involve shifts in roles and responsibilities of all family members.

The key to a successful transition in this sensitive area is to keep all communication lines open. Sit down with your family and talk it over; emphasize the importance of your education and the added burdens it may place on all of you. The extra time you need for studying and attending class may mean that some of your family responsibilities will have to be divided among other family members. The more you, your family and friends understand and accept the fact that some changes will be necessary, the easier it will be for all of you to adjust to them.

7) **Make full use of student service offices.** Colleges and universities recognize that the concerns of students—young and old—are not limited to academics. They have responded with a growing network of student service specialists to help students with their individual needs.

Counselors and advisors in these offices are generally well acquainted with the kinds of problems students have. Counselors who are specially trained to deal with non-traditional students may be found in the continuing education offices. They can personally assist you or direct you to the right people in matters such as admissions, registration, financial aid, and community resources.

While the range of services varies among student service offices, some counselors can help with highly specialized matters. Orientation, study skills, child care arrangements, emergency loans, commuter clubs, leaves of absence, college credit transfers, and student grievances are a few such topics. Other offices may offer medical and psychological counsel. Often there are separate offices to advise students on housing, field studies, religious affairs, and minority affairs.

Every college has a financial aid office. Generally speaking, financial aid counselors refer students to sources to help them pay for tuition, textbooks, and other college-related expenses. The financial assistance may be a loan or a grant; both are available from numerous sources, on Federal, state, local, and private-sector levels. Even part-time students are eligible in many cases. On some campuses, financial aid offices also refer students to part-time employment. On others, there are separate student employment offices.

One other student services office merits special mention: career planning. Many students wait until the final months before graduation to visit this office, not realizing the range of services it offers. Of course, this office helps graduating students get jobs. But career planners can also

provide information about graduate schools, summer jobs, salaries and labor market projections, and career choice in general. Many offices have adjacent career libraries, with job-related literature.

In short, the student services office is one of the most important resources you will encounter on campus. Make the most of it.

Adjusting to the College Environment

People of all ages have difficulties with transitions—changes in old routines, adjustment to new surroundings and relationships. Returning to college after a long absence, or entering it for the first time, is such a transition. Sometimes problems surface immediately and are quickly solved. Other problems start out small and become major headaches. Naturally, it's always easiest to solve problems during their early stages—or, better yet, to predict and prevent them. Here are some adjustments that returning students often have to make and strategies for coping with them:

Impatience. Non-traditional students often find the road back to college a rocky one. If you have invested a great deal of time, money, and energy to enroll in a college, you will be understandably eager to see your efforts rewarded. Anything that stands in your way becomes a nuisance, and on most campuses you will find many such nuisances: Registration lines, waiting lists for some courses, hard-to-find professors, and overly busy office help are only a few.

The frustrations do not end with registration. Consider this situation: After going through registration and finally entering the classroom, you are interested in the immediate practical application of what you are learning. While younger students are encouraged to think about ultimate goals, for you the "ultimate" is here and now. With that in mind, you encounter professors (some younger than you) who trail off into subject areas that seem, to you, to have little to do with the main theme of the course. In other words, you may grow impatient with what you consider time wasted on trivia.

Under these circumstances, you must bear in mind that college is not a place for an "instant education." You must realize, furthermore, that much of the subject matter that seems unimportant or useless while you are studying it will become valuable at a later, unexpected date. Not every experience you have in college will help you later in life. But many of your studies **will** prove helpful, even if they don't seem that way at the time. And since the value of these studies is hard to predict, it is best to pay attention to everything, or to as much as possible.

Grade Competition. "Get the course—get the grade—get the degree." That summarizes the attitude of many who go to college, and a passing grade seems the key to the whole process. Therefore you will find yourself sitting next to many students who appear overly concerned with getting "A"s in every course. This often sets up an internal conflict, especially among returning students. On the one hand, you would rather

not get swept up in excessive emphasis on grades. Such an attitude seems petty, and it may appear to get in the way of your overall objectives—to acquire practical knowledge as quickly as possible, to gain marketable skills, and to get that diploma. But on the other hand, many professors grade on a "curve" system, where those who are the most grade-conscious set the pace. You don't want to be left behind.

Grades **are** important—never underestimate them. Whether or not they are always fair, grades are designed to measure your performance—how much you have learned. At some point during your college education you may hear someone declare that "employers never look at grades." Don't believe it! However, they do look at some grades more closely than others; an investment firm, for example, won't care much about how well you did in ceramics. Therefore, while you should certainly aim to "get the grade" in all your courses—so as to keep your point average high—it is wise to concentrate especially on the grades in your major field of study. Some schools, when releasing your grades, provide two figures: your overall grade point average, and the average for the courses in your major.

Overconfidence. As you already know, your status as a returning student provides you with many advantages over younger peers. Remember, however, to put these advantages into proper perspective. Some older students assume that there are really few new things their professors can teach them; in a sense, their life experiences shield them against new knowledge. Some returning students further assume that age and intelligence are synonymous. They think their instructors will automatically be more impressed by them than by "traditional," younger students. The errors of these assumptions should be obvious, but often they are not.

Returning students who enter the classroom with these assumptions sometimes reinforce them by indulging in long, disjointed classroom discourses on their experiences. It's easy to see why: These students feel the need to prove themselves by talking about themselves before the professor and the class. Reveling in the past may provide a feeling of security. The problem with these students is—to put it bluntly—that they can become boring. Further, their ramblings may have little to do with the course topic. Feel free to speak up in class, by all means, but keep the overall goals of the course in mind.

Lack of Confidence. At the other end of the scale are those returning students who suffer from inferiority complexes. In and out of the classroom, they dwell on what they cannot do rather than what they **can** do. There's nothing wrong with being aware of one's shortcomings, but not to the point of paranoia. Don't keep telling your professors, counselors, job interviewers and fellow students how unworthy you are, or else they'll begin to believe you.

Fortunately, lack of confidence tends to vanish as one's college career gets under way. The tasks associated with a college education may seem puzzling at first, but they become less mysterious in a fairly short time. So it is elsewhere in life. Many of us are now quite confident about driving a car, balancing a checkbook, or operating a clock radio, whereas at one time we were not.

Older students' lack of confidence is generally related to an uneasiness about dealing with students who have just graduated from high school. Indeed, it can be unsettling for an older student to find himself or herself the only person over 35 among a sea of students in their late teens or early 20s. If you have accomplished a great deal during your career—if, for example, you are a successful businessman or businesswoman—the experience can be particularly embarrassing at first. Again, the embarrassment is likely to fade with time. Remember, also, that as the percentage of returning students continues to grow, the likelihood of your being the only "old timer" in the class diminishes.

MISTAKEN ASSUMPTIONS

Another area of adjustment in college has to do with mistaken ideas. Human behavior is determined to a large extent by how other people and things are perceived. Assumptions are based on what one sees and hears and how it relates to one's environment. Unfortunately, because everyone's experience is limited, it is all too easy to form mistaken beliefs based on false or incomplete information. In the case of a returning student, chances are that his or her personal experiences have not included much about college.

Bear in mind that colleges and universities are, in one sense, academic cloisters. What goes on in the halls of higher learning and the way it goes on are often far removed from the day-to-day routines of the household or the work world. A good basic rule for the new college student, regardless of age, is: **Never assume.** And in order to avoid wrong assumptions about college, it is wise to step back every now and then and view the role of a college education from a wider perspective.

As we have already mentioned, the college student is certain to hear numerous rumors, fallacies, and examples of erroneous thinking while on campus. Below are some mistaken conceptions —things people think are true but may not be. Not all of these misconceptions may seem immediately applicable to the life of a college student. But you should think about them now, because they can put you in a receptive frame of mind for the way you go about your studies.

1) "A college education provides all of the skills and knowledge needed for success and satisfaction on the job." Not necessarily. Almost any position requires informal and formal on-the-job training. In some careers—business management, for example—it may take years to be thoroughly trained. Furthermore, employers will not expect a new worker to be 100% or even 50% productive the first day of work (or during the first month or two). Expect "honeymoon periods," trials and errors, and latitude for correcting mistakes. Just because you have a college degree, you won't be expected to know everything.

2) "All of the occupational skills and knowledge a college offers will be provided in formal instruction." Much of the career information learned at college will be gained outside the classroom/lecture hall. Fellow students, campus advisors, personal and career counselors, visitors, guest lecturers, and people you meet during fieldwork are all potential sources of career information.

3) "A professor is an ideal work model." The range of skills and backgrounds among faculty members is amazing. Some, indeed, are good models to follow when one is pursuing a career—especially if the professor has had a career outside the classroom. But many professors have never worked outside the campus setting, which is a highly specialized environment. Using them as work models is questionable, unless you want to be a professor.

4) "Assigned readings or classroom lectures about the business and professional world always present a realistic view." Frequently, the views expressed are more idealistic than realistic. Authors and lecturers are prone to talk more about what ought to be than what actually goes on. (Some, on the other hand, delight in telling horror stories about the "real world," which is just as deceiving.) For example, management experts always advise that, before you make any decisions affecting other people, you should 1) research all the pros and cons, 2) call several meetings with the people involved, and 3) hear their opinions. That's good advice and an ideal way to make decisions. But realistically, on the job, a supervisor is likely to stop at your desk at 10 a.m. and demand a decision and a written report before lunch. Naturally, thorough decision making is more difficult then.

5) "I'm an older student—everybody's looking at me." Other students, like you, are concerned mainly with how they fare in the course. They're not paying as much attention to you as you think. Similarly, professors will expect neither more nor less from you because of your age. Professors do not prepare course outlines and lectures with particular students in mind. When classes start, the assumption is that all students, regardless of age, are new to the area of study.

6) "The most important thing is to get a diploma and get a job." This reveals a shortsighted attitude. It's much wiser to set your sights on your **career goals** than on "a job," for a number of reasons. One question job interviewers are sure to ask is, "Where do you see yourself in five years?" Have a good, plausible answer ready.

Your first job upon graduation is extremely important. But it is not a reliable measurement for the status you will achieve in your career. Careers evolve slowly, subtly. A career is a series of jobs, with various assignments and responsibilities. Even within any given job it is quite possible that the responsibilities and opportunities will shift over time—probably for the better. Therefore, keep in mind that each job is a building block toward your larger career objectives—no less, no more.

Objectives & Strategies for Career Planning

Many college students, especially during the early stages of campus life, view "a career" or even "a job" as an exotic, faraway thing. Therefore they wait until the last minute—their senior year, or the final year of their postgraduate studies—to plan their careers. This approach gives college students one less thing to worry about for a while, but it can complicate

matters in the end. Career planning is a more involved, time-consuming activity than many students realize. It's never too early to start—or, at least, to **think** about starting, to know how the process works.

Non-traditional students are more likely to realize the importance of career planning, especially if they have spent some time in the work world. If you are already familiar with career-planning strategies during college, consider this section a review. If not, consider it an introduction to a crucial skill. (There are many books on career planning, which treat the subject more thoroughly than this format permits.) In either case, as you read these guidelines, think about how they relate to your own objectives.

Here, then, are some guidelines for career planning during college:

1) **Establish personal relationships needed for references**. Employers and graduate schools will ask for references, so have them ready. During your undergraduate education, the most likely sources of references are probably your professors and advisors. Go out of your way to get to know them. Some college career offices have systems to help you collect and send letters of reference. If such a service is not available, you will have to submit names and addresses or contact people on your own when the time comes to do so.

Reference gathering, like most career planning strategies, should begin well before graduation. If you've taken a particularly good course, at any academic level—one that appears relevant to your career goals, one in which the professor has recognized your achievement and effort—ask the professor for a letter of reference at the end of the course. Don't be shy; instructors expect it. If you develop a good relationship with an advisor or counselor, ask for a reference **early** in the last semester or quarter of classes. Other students will be clamoring for these letters as the college term draws to a close. It's smart to have a head start. (With professors, of course, wait until you are on solid academic footing in the class.)

2) **Work on your resume from the first day of college**. This is not to say that you should be **writing** your resume from the first day. Rather, you should be collecting experiences that can be included in your resume. Special projects, volunteer and committee work, field trips and research activities are experiences that can enhance your academic background. In other words (here's a phrase you're sure to hear on campus), they "look good on a resume." Later, when you and a career counselor (or some other advisor) begin writing the resume, some of these experiences may have to be pared down or eliminated for space reasons. But it's good to be able to select from an ample supply. Often, when an employer is choosing between two recent college graduates, the one with more extracurricular experience will be the victor.

3) **Develop communications skills.** College, in a sense, can be viewed as one big communications course. Regardless of the subject matter, every course requires students to express themselves, whether orally, literally, or artistically. Students who can fit public speaking and writing courses into their schedules have a special advantage. If your schedule simply does not allow time for these courses, you can still develop communications skills. Seize every chance to write and speak in class.

It's invaluable practice for the "real world." Nearly every job held by college graduates requires the ability to write reports and correspondence, interview clients, or conduct meetings.

4) **Learn to deal with all kinds of people.** College is a crucial time to build human relations skills, because you'll need them in virtually any profession. You will meet a great variety of people on campus, and some will be easier to deal with than others. In each case, ask yourself why you relate to the individual the way you do. Then work on improving your versatility with others. This does not mean that you have to like everyone. Merely try to get along with as many people as you can, and handle conflicts diplomatically. In jobs after college you will have to work with many of the same types of personalities that you have come across on campus. But on the job, more than in college, you will be held accountable for your interpersonal skills. In any organization there are people who perform their duties well but who have trouble holding their jobs because they cannot get along with their coworkers.

In sum, career planning, in the broadest sense, includes everything that must be done in preparation for work. It begins with the soul-searching involved in deciding whether or not to attend college, if not earlier. Selecting a college or university, choosing courses, taking notes at lectures, writing papers, reading books and articles (course-related and otherwise)—all should be viewed as components of the career planning process, for all will affect one's professional life.

However, career planning does become a more intensive, time-consuming series of tasks as one nears graduation. Only then must you concentrate on the nitty-gritty of writing a resume (and a finished one-page resume seldom betrays the immense amount of time and effort that have gone into it), writing cover letters, preparing for and attending job interviews, filling out applications, and arranging for references. It becomes especially important at this point to make frequent visits to the career planning and job placement offices. Remember, however, that one's success during this climactic period will also depend on the years of preliminary career planning that have preceded it.

Your Education: A Continuing Resource

Once you have completed a formal course of study, and are in possession of your hard-won diploma, don't get the idea that your education is over. Whether you plan to assume a business or professional position, or return home to help manage household, it is important to realize that education is a continuing process. This has always been so; whether we like it or not, at every age throughout our lives we are exposed to experiences that force us to learn.

But particularly in this day and age, with the rapid explosion of technology and the knowledge associated with it, it behooves us to continue to stretch our minds and broaden our understanding. Not just to "keep up"—although that is important—but, in a more positive sense, to help

us to continue to realize our maximum potential.

Still, as one drifts away from a learning-by-definition environment—such as college—one's learning skills may become rusty. Here are some ways to assure that your education will not stop abruptly when you receive your bachelor's degree:

1) **Take refresher courses.** Many colleges, universities and vocational schools offer courses specifically designed for business and professional people to bone up on their technical skills or to bring them up to date on what is happening in their fields. Because university administrators recognize the time limitations of those seeking continuing education, these courses are often scheduled in the evenings.

2) **Seek an advanced degree.** Anyone with a bachelor's degree can go for a master's; anyone with a master's can aspire to a Ph.D. An advanced degree isn't just a "nice thing to have," or something that "looks good on a resume." Just as importantly, it can enrich your total awareness of the subject at hand and inspire you to learn still more. And, to an even greater extent than an undergraduate education, postgraduate studies can be sought at one's own pace; again, recognizing that postgraduate students have many commitments and interests, colleges tend to allow great flexibility to those pursuing advanced degrees.

3) **Work toward a degree in a related or unrelated field.** More and more people are finding it helpful to possess formal education in more than one field. These need not be advanced degrees; the value of a second degree is usually as a complement to one's original field of study. For example, if you have a bachelor's degree in psychology, you might want to get a bachelor's degree in sociology. The two disciplines are already closely related and seem to be moving still closer together into the broader field of social psychology. If you have a business degree, a second degree in computer science might be valuable—especially considering the business world's increasing reliance on advanced technology. Finally, some students seek second degrees in areas totally unrelated to those of their professional expertise. A biology major with a fondness for Beethoven, for instance, may want to seek a degree in music history just for the fun of it.

4) **Attend seminars.** Universities, businesses, and professional organizations sponsor hundreds of seminars throughout the country every year. While each seminar should be evaluated on its own merits, those sponsored by well-known, reputable organizations tend to attract the best speakers and contain the most interesting information. In addition to keeping you abreast of developments in your field, seminars are important sources of professional contacts and career information.

5) **Investigate tuition-assistance programs.** Many companies (especially larger corporations) will pay all or part of your tuition for college courses related to your job. Their theory is that an educated workforce is a productive workforce. In other words, the more you know about the business, the better your work will be. Some students wait until they join such a company to begin their college education, fitting their classes into their work schedules. It can be a lengthy road to a degree, but it's certainly economical.

6) **Last but not least—read.** There is no better way to maintain your

education skills than by reading. Newspapers, magazines, and books can keep you up to date, as no other media can, on new developments in your field and in the rest of the world. It is likely, in fact, that you will never be able to keep up with the pace of information coming at you. But there are strategies for coping with the situation. First, see if there are any professional digests in your field of interest that offer an overview. Second, make up a reading list of selected periodicals and books that you can learn from and enjoy. Above all, be on the lookout for new materials. The printed word may prove to be the most important part of your continuing education.

Robert J. Babcock, a professor at Cornell University's New York State College of Human Ecology, wrote this booklet in cooperation with the College Division of the Association of American Publishers.
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